

Message Text

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PAGE 01 REYKJA 00508 111947 Z

46

ACTION OPR-02

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FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3599

WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0508

WHITE HOUSE FOR HENKEL

DEPT FOR A/ OPR

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP IC FR

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

REF: REYKJAVIK 0506

1. ON AN FYI BASIS ONLY, I HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY VERY RELIABLE SOURCE IN FONMINISTRY THE DIFFICULTIES BEING ENCOUNTERED ON A DECISION FOR SITE OF MTG WITH PRIMIN. THEY SEEM TO BE AS FOLLOWS:

A. HOUSE SELECTED FOR POMPIDOU' S RESIDENCE IS OWNED BY PROMINENT MEMBER OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTY (INDEPENDENCE PARTY). PRIMIN FEELS IT WOULD BE DE-GRADING TO MAKE CALL ON PRESIDENT POMPIDOU AT THE HOME OF AN ICELANDIC NATIONAL, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF HIS POLITICAL AFFILIATION;

B. CERTAIN MEMBERS OF CABINET (COMMUNISTS PRIMARILY) HAVE MADE PRIMIN FEEL THAT IF HE PAID CALL AT RESIDENCES HE WOULD BE GIVING ICELAND SECOND- CLASS STATUS;

C. THERE IS ALSO FEELING IN CABINET, BECAUSE OF THE SENSITI-
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PAGE 02 REYKJA 00508 111947 Z

VITY OF THE DEFENSE FORCE RETENTION ISSUE, THAT IF PRIMIN MADE CALL ON PRESIDENTS AT RESIDENCES, THE ANTI- DEFENSE FORCE ELEMENTS MIGHT GAIN A PROPAGANDA ADVANTAGE CLAIMING GOVT WAS BEING SUBSERVIENT TO THE BIG POWERS.

2. THE SUGGESTION THAT USG WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION IF GOI PROPOSED HOLDING THE MTG IN THE ALTHING BUILDING HAS BEEN TURNED DOWN BECAUSE OF FRENCH AMBASSADOR' S OBJECTION AND BECAUSE CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN THE CABINET (PRESUMABLY COMMUNISTS) DID NOT LIKE THE IDEA.

3. MY INFORMANT ADVISES ME THAT THE PROPOSAL CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION BY GOI IS FOR PRESIDENT ELDJARN TO TRAVEL WITH EACH PRESIDENT FROM KEFLAVIK TO REYKJAVIK AND PROCEED IMMEDIATELY TO THE STATE COUNCIL HOUSE WHICH HOUSES THE OFFICES OF THE PRESIDENCY AND PRIME MINISTRY. AFTER ABOUT A MINUTE OR TWO IN PRESIDENT ELDJARN' S OFFICE, HE WOULD ASK THE PRIMIN TO JOIN THEM, AND HE THEN WOULD LEAVE THE ROOM. ANOTHER VARIATION IS THAT PRESIDENT ELDJARN WOULD ESCORT THE PRESIDENTS TO THE PRIMIN' S OFFICE ACROSS THE HALL, AND THEN DEPART. THIS PROPOSAL MEANS THAT PRESIDENT ELDJARN WILL BE DOING A LOT OF TRAVELLING TO AND FROM KEFLAVIK, BUT IF GOI FEELS MTG AT STATE COUNCIL HOUSE IS A HAPPY SOLUTION TO THE PROTOCOL PROBLEM, I WOULD RECOMMEND USG GIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO THIS COMPROMISE. ACTION REQUESTED. PLEASE ADVISE POSITION I SHOULD TAKE IF I AM ASKED NEXT WEEK TO MAKE INFORMAL COMMENT ON THIS PROPOSAL.

4. STATE COUNCIL HOUSE IS ONE OF OLDEST BUILDINGS IN REYKJAVIK. IT WAS FIRST COMMISSIONED BY KING OF DENMARK IN 1749 AS A JAIL. BUILDING WAS COMPLETED IN 1771 AND SERVED AS JAIL UNTIL 1819, WHEN IT THEN BECAME OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF DANISH GOVERNOR UNTIL 1904. FROM THAT DATE UNTIL EARLY 1960 S, IT HOUSED ALL GOI MINISTRIES. IN MID-1960 IT HOUSED ONLY PRIME MINISTRY AND MFA. IN FALL 1972 MFA MOVED TO NEW QUARTERS. FEW MONTHS AGO OFFICE OF PRESIDENE MOVED FROM ALTHING TO THIS BUILDING. ITS LOCATION IS JUST DOWN THE STREET FROM US EMBASSY, ABOUT THREE QUARTERS OF A MILE.

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